

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8736

INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15581

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PFOR, TH, US, VN

SUBJECT: HANOI CRITICISM AND THE US-THAI NAVAL EXERCISE

REF: A) STATE 178896 (NOTAL)

B) BANGKOK 15493

1. SUMMARY. RECENT NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACKS ON THAILAND FOR ITS MILITARY TIES WITH THE U.S., INCLUDING THE UPCOMING JOINT NAVAL EXERCISE, ARE NOT MAKING LIFE EASY FOR THE THAI. A CONFUSED UPI STORY CONCERNING MILITARY AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. DOES NOT HELP THE SITUATION. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES WE SHOULD NOT UNILATERALLY CANCEL THE NAVAL EXERCISE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING THE PAST TEN DAYS HA OI HAS BEEN ISSUING STRONG DENUNCIATIONS OF THAILAND FOR ITS "COLLUSION" WITH THE U.S. SPECIFICALLY, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE CONDEMNING THE THAI -) FOR THEIR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ANNUAL NAVAL EXERCISE WITH THE U.S. ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE, B) FOR
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"PERMITTING THE U.S. TO SEND AIRCRAFT ON RECONNAISSANCE

MISSIONS OVER INDOCHINA FROM UTAPAO AIRBASE," AND C) FOR THE JOINT THAI-U.S. CONSTRUCTION OF THE RAEAR STATION AT DOI INTHANON IN CHIANG MAI. THE ATTACKS USE A VARIETY OF WAYS TO SUGGEST THAT "REACTIONARY" THAILAND REALLY HAS NOT CHANGED.

3. THESE ATTACKS HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY MADE THE THAI UNCOMFORTABLE, AND WE WONDER WHETHER THE END IS YET IN SIGHT. AS PART OF HIS EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN TENTATIVELY PLANNED TO VISIT HANOI IN LATE AUGUST, AT WHICH TIME THAI OFFICIALS EXPECTED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS TO BE ESTABLISHED. THESE PLANS, ALREADY UNCERTAIN, HAVE NOW BECOME EVEN LESS DEFINITE. THE QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER THAILAND, IN AN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF ITS GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY, WILL FEEL PRESSED TO MAKE A GESTURE TOWARD HANOI, SUCH AS CANCELLING THE NAVAL EXERCISE OR WHETHER THE RAPPORT ESTABLISHED DURING KHUKRIT'S VISIT TO CHINA (BANGKOK 14812) HAS CONVINCED THE RTG THAT IT HAS A NEW ALLY AGAINST THE DRV/USSR AXIS, AND CAN THUS DECELERATE ITS APPROACH TO HANOI.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY ON THE DECISION TO PHASE OUT SEATO EVENTUALLY, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT TOLD THE PRESS UPON HIS RETURN TO THAILAND JULY 27 THAT THE THANAT-RUSK AGREEMENT WAS ONLY A JOINT STATEMENT ON THE PARTS OF TWO OFFICIALS WHO ARE NO LONGER IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY, WHICH MEANS IT MIGHT NO LONGER BE IN FORCE (REFTEL). IN OUR OPINION, WE SHOULD NOT IN ANY SENSE CONSTRUCT THIS REMARK AS NULLIFYING ALL MILITARY AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S., AS UPI REPORTED. UNFORTUNATELY, THE UPI REPORTERS WHO COVERED KHUKRIT'S RETURN ARE NOT KNOWN FOR THEIR COMPETENCE OR ACCURACY. IF THE BUREAU CHIEF HAD NOT BEEN ON LEAVE, WE ARE CONVINCED THE STORY WOULD NEVER HAVE HIT THE WIRES.

5. THUS FAR, THE THAI HAVE BEEN DEFENDING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE NAVAL MANEUVERS. CHATCHAI TOLD THE PRESS JULY 29 THAT THIS IS AN INTERNAL MATTER, AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CRITICISM "IS REGARDED AS INTERFERENCE IN OUR INTERNAL CONFIDENTIAL

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AFFAIRS." THEN ACTING PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN SUGGESTED JULY 23 THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WERE BEING IMPUDENT. MFA UNDER SECRETARY PHAEN WANNAMETHI TOLD THE DCM JULY 29 THAT IT IS TOO LATE IN THE GAME TO CANCEL THE NAVAL EXERCISE. HE ADDED THAT SINCE HANOI HAS MADE AN ISSUE OUT OF IT, THE RTG SHOULD NOT BOW TO NORTH VIETNAMESE PRESSURE.

6. ACTION RECOMMENDED: WE RECOMMEND THAT WE NOT UNILATERALLY

CANCEL THE NAVAL EXERCISE. SHOULD THE RTG CANCEL IT, THEN WE
URGE THAT WE GO ALONG WITH THEIR DECISION, BUT WE OUGHT
NOT TAKE THE LEAD.
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